

# SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

**BILL NO.** Senate Bill 1087

**PRINTER NO.** 1544

**AMOUNT**

No Additional Fiscal Impact

**FUND**

General Fund

**DATE INTRODUCED**

March 15, 2018

**PRIME SPONSOR**

Senator Baker

**DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL**

Senate Bill 1087 establishes the Interbranch Commission on the Child-Welfare System Act (act).

Senate Bill 1087 creates a joint legislative, executive and judicial Interbranch Commission (commission) to conduct a noncriminal investigation and review of the operations of the child-welfare system in the Commonwealth.

The bill requires commission membership to consist of the following members:

- Four members appointed by the Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, including two juvenile court judges, one guardian ad litem, and one member of the Juvenile Court Procedural Rules Committee;
- Four members, appointed by the President pro tempore and the Minority Leader of the Senate and the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, who are not members of the General Assembly but are knowledgeable and experienced in foster care and adoption;
- Four members appointed by the Governor, including a foster parent, a member of a private sector organization providing services, and two members of a child-welfare advocacy group;
- The Auditor General or a designee; and
- The Deputy Secretary of the Office of Children, Youth and Families in the Department of Human Services.

The bill provides that a majority of the members of the commission will select a chairman. The bill also requires the commission to meet at least monthly with the first meeting convening within 45 days of the effective date of the act. It allows members to be reimbursed for expenses incurred in service to the commission.

The bill requires the Department of Human Services (department) to provide administrative services to the commission and mandates the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts to collaborate with the commission.

The bill grants the following powers to the commission:

- Investigate and analyze the abusive treatment of children in foster care;

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- Investigate and analyze the activities related to the child-welfare system;
- Review the practices relating to the selection of foster parents and adoptive parents;
- Review the procedures used to respond to the conduct of foster and adoptive parents;
- Review the oversight of foster homes and adoptive homes; and
- Hold public hearings, issue subpoenas and take depositions.

The bill imposes the following duties upon the commission:

- Accept and review written comments;
- Make recommendations, within 24 months of the effective date of the act, to the Governor, the Supreme Court, the Senate, the House of Representatives and the department regarding improving the child-welfare system; preventing the reoccurrence of events of abuse; and changing state statutes and state and local practices, rules and procedures regarding the child-welfare system; and
- Make required reports to the Governor, the Supreme Court, the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Department within 24 months of the effective date of the Act.

The bill stipulates that the act will expire two years from its effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

Senate Bill 1087 will have no significant fiscal impact to the Commonwealth. The estimated annual travel costs for the commission are \$2,500 - \$3,000 based upon similar type of commissions in the Commonwealth. In addition, the bill requires the Department of Human Services to provide administrative services to the commission which can be accomplished within existing staffing levels and funding provided to the department.